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The grace of their breakage

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The grace of their breakage

by

Claire Elizabeth Kruesel

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Creative Writing and Environment

Program of Study Committee:
Debra Marquart, Major Professor
    Ned Balbo
    Karen Bermann
    Linda Shenk

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The Grace of Their Breakage
A fraction escapes the square root
DIG SITE

I unearth another
old note from you

and ponder its fate.
Each time I feel more

like an archaeologist,
less like an architect.

The obsolete
once was common

reassurance. Vessels
of intentions.

In morning light,
I hold up each syllable

like broken pottery,
examine close.

I wonder if your pen
would press surer by now

or feel the same
as these earlier specimens.

I believe you believed
just as I did - fooled

ourselves every time
we thought we knew
what we were burying.
IN THE AUCTION BARN (1)

Rafts of cardboard flats
settle the cool concrete floor
like plats of land.

Paranoid buyers
navigate fold-up tables
piled with china, linens, gold-titled books,

searching for that one great thing
everyone else will overlook.

In a box of tarnished bells
I discover what I think is a Soleri -
pebbled finish and isoceles dangles
   hint
   it was forged by the same architect

who envisioned
   a geodesic dome haven in the American Southwest,
sells bells
   to well-to-do tourists.

Nonchalant, I act intrigued
   by the ellipsoid camel bell,
   flared cow bell - turning them
in the light, camouflaging the Soleri
in its burnished nest among the animals.
SKULL

*Found in an Ames, Iowa riverbed, 2013*

I.

He found it
near their sandy camp -
starved stream
and tarps, blue crushed cans,
glass shards, rusted crescent husk
of enamelware bowl.

The man watched each dawn
from the gorge, where it’s quiet
and sun gilds the rim
far above his head.
On a log, he hummed.

And there it was:
the press announcement said, *Female;*
*Unknown.*

A forensics lab in another city
scraped bone,
examined fissures,
confirmed sex,
*Suspected murder.*

She was 200 years old.
Last year, flood
and now the earth’s upchurned words,
her skull
labeled on a shelf somewhere.
II.

I meet no women at the camp.
The men’s bodies clump, clutch warmth
like the drought-bare silt
that sees sun only two hours a day.
There are no birthdays, no names.

Once there were train tracks here;
now, rusted iron. A bread bag strangled
inside a hungry animal.
Among tent stakes, erupting from mud,
the curved pelvis of an old white kettle.

Winter closes the secret entrance.

III.

When snow arrives, they migrate,
leaving red-top coolers,
frozen tire tracks,
ropes knotted on a branch.

I miss the man’s morning song.
I circle the char. The clearing
where they sat together, bet

on who would kill the buck.
I saw him once - 13-point, cartoonish.
He froze me with his gaze
and I did not breathe until he moved.
NOUNS THAT WERE ONCE VERBS

Our father brought the swingset home
from some estate
or auction,
or abandoned yard.

Four swings hang
from the rust-bitten frame, sunk-footed behind the garage
where he parks the Army mule,
leans the Green Parrot neon sign - taller than me
even now - from a closed restaurant of the same name.

My sister claimed the taupe horse:
distinctive brow and mousy mane, paint worn
where fingers and rain had gripped its plastic curls.

I rode the rotund whale
suspended a bit higher than the horse.
My swinging mammal was also plain
beneath painted saddle, red-lipped grin,
navy sailor hat, beady eyes
and swollen belly, flaked-paint blue.

We never used the other two -
one yellow, hammock-style
and one blue, infant swing
with two leg holes a slim adult could wriggle into.

We’d swing and swing, one of us imagining prairie
and the other, waves -
no magic
in their attachment to the bar above.
ANIMAL LOCOMOTION

After Muybridge, 1887

I.

In my yoga class, a chart on the wall depicts a figure reaching up (inhale),
folding down (exhale),
spines asserting range of motion.

Everyone knows the sequence
(up dog, down dog)
like major cities on a road trip

but when I take a different route
they don’t trust my instructions -
pause
to watch the one-legged mid-air twist:
   a new, unnamed transition
from one landmark to the next.

II.

The problem with Math instruction
is often like this:
a fraction escapes the square root

looking like a completely different creature.
The teacher moves on
while students stare at the before and after,

trying to reconcile
how an elephant and a crocodile
could possibly be related.
III.

A psychologist showed me a sequence of pictures: a woman, a child, in different poses.

What happened here?, he asked.
I was to fill in the blanks, 
tell a story

and my assumptions 
would illuminate the unseeable places 
in my brain.

IV.

Speed-walking is an Olympic sport. 
The main rule is

one foot on the ground at all times 
but everyone cheats just a little -

as long as the camera eye 
can’t see that sliver of light

between foot and earth, 
where the animal declares itself

extraterrestrial.
ALL HIS PRECIOUS THINGS WERE FEMININE, NAMED

Angel, the acoustic guitar
and Lola, the hollow bodied Gibson
on which he wrote a song about Ruby, his ‘47 Plymouth.

In the storage unit he kept a pallet
of brick-red Rustoleum
for Ruby’s next makeover.

Next to the spray cans
he’d curled and duct-taped a buffalo hide
to fit in a garbage pail.

Female buffalo hides
are larger, thicker.
He spoke of the hide as if it had saved him
because it had - Iowa winter
in a tin-can camper
in his half-brother’s garage without a door.

A year after he left the country
I called the storage business and explained
but there was nothing they could do.

Someone had bought the contents
at auction
long ago, someone had unwrapped the duct tape

and wondered the name of the animal.
AGRETTI

In his mother’s Iowa backyard I labeled garden markers for greens we’d coaxed from seed: Kale, Parsley, Agretti.
As we drove away, rain melted my handwriting but I’d remember what was planted where.

My mother disliked the word “boyfriend.”
He and I crossed over from Iowa to Minnesota, unpacked the seedlings we’d brought for my parents –

agretti: slender green tendrils -
and all four of us dined outside, watched Orioles peck grape jam
and Hummingbirds buzz trumpet vines.

That evening, my parents’ dog Scout ran beside us, flashlight on gravel.
Rain softened footprints into the road, agretti into the ground.

The moon looks the same everywhere - facing earth it is always blind,
a one-way mirror reflecting our gazes back to each other.
CRÈCHE
Alki Beach Park, Seattle

Meg and I skip a meeting, head to the water.
Both finders, we sought
what the shore washes up - seaglass; a Seagull skull.

A Goldeneye will have to do.
I keep watch as she attends to the bird’s body,
white breast damp and lumpy
like a down pillow abandoned in rain.

Women with dogs pass
as if ordered for precise delivery one minute apart.

The bird’s eyes were not born as its name indicates.
Its gaze starts grey, transitions
through blue, and finally, gold.

Meg unwinds seaweed from its beak. She assesses its neck.
I’ll have to twist it off, she speculates.
I collect striped stones, cross-sections of spiral shells.
I look for the one thing that doesn’t belong.

Goldeneyes lay eggs in other birds’ nests, even other species.
This cross-mother, chimeric brood is called a crèche.

Sea-tumbled glass triangles
become a breadcrumb trail. I spot the marble
nested among dark stones. Its dullness, like the gelatinous
center of an eyeball, masks a molten red flame inside.

I warm the glass in my palm.
We wait for three Boston Terriers on one leash to pass.
The Goldeneye’s head releases from its body.
1ST POSTCARD (½ YEAR LATER)
March 2006, San José, Costa Rica

No doubt you would love the butterflies, cloud forest, Toucans. We wrote Happy Birthday Rob on the beam of an outdoor restaurant by the beach.

Did you see the giant spheres here, hurled up on cliffs and made of stone from hundreds of miles out, the ocean bed? Amazing. I posed in front of them, silly with a leg-kick like I learned to do with your friends from home. All we do is talk about you. Did you see our costume party at Christmas? I dressed like a French au pair because it was all my luggage could come up with but no one knew what it was, to take care of someone else’s babies.

The ocean jasper you gave me shattered in the hostel shower out of nowhere, I hadn’t touched it. I stared at the pieces for a long time and wondered if you were trying to communicate. There are plenty of things I’ve done wrong but no point in hiding them from you. I will be here if you want to talk, looking for signs you and I would have never believed before all this.
RESISTANT

*Water is excluded by fine transverse threads which fill up the minute interstices formed by warp and weft, though air - being more plastic - still finds an easy passage through the invisible spaces remaining.*

- *Burberry advertisement for water- and wind-resistant fabric, 1910*

*1850s:*

Cargo ships loaded
with rolls of Egyptian cotton

hoist new sails:
flexible, light -

woven with wax
(replaced heavy yellowed linseed) -

a firm palm
to carve Atlantic winds.

*2015:*

Iowa sidewalks
mountainous ice

like the molded peaks of Greenland
miniaturized from an airplane window

and weeks ago
daily concerns evolved
past mercury
and onto windchill;

I alternate my bag-carrying hand,
flex and extend each finger
tending them
  like new chicks,
  recently unheated

and from the lull
of a low footbridge
  I marvel at a small crack
  in the creek’s porcelain skin:

dark water -
  elusive liquid form -

shielded, its upturned collar
made of the same stuff.

1897:

*Far enough away to be romantic ... close enough to be accessible*
- *Historian Pierre Berton on the Klondike gold rush*

Prospectors channel through Seattle,
wool-stocked shelves
  (blankets, boots, sweaters,
   sleeping bags -)
of C.C. Filson's,
staking claim
  to the microclimate
  between skin and frontier.
1912:

Freeport, Maine: L. L. Bean founded on a waterproof boot.

90% of first batch returned
due to defect
and the company keeps their word:

repair, replace, improve.
The world will not get through.

1970s:

Modern hunters
seed forest, field
in blaze-orange
Gore-Tex: waterproof yet breathable

while on grassy knolls
vintage Filson, L. L. Bean
waxed cotton canvas
continues resisting

water, wind
like the zippered plumage of birds,
like mosaic’ed scales of fish,
fingers laced seamless -

makeshift cup
to hold a taste of stream.
IV.

1920s, explorers
Nansen, Amundson,
Shackleton and Scott
muzzle the bite
of polar climate
with wind-proof Burberry gabardine.

Climbers at the root of Everest
wear pale green overalls
suited to extremes -

\textit{rain, mist, sleet or snow, fluctuating temperatures,}
\textit{thorns, fish hooks,}
\textit{cold winds or burning sun.}

Now as then,
from Everest’s 29,029 feet
a person travels
through space
1.9 miles per hour faster
than a flower at the mountain’s base.

The exhilarated air,
thin and hurtling
smacks
rosy-cheeked summiters -
their waxed cotton,
technical fabric

and, finding no passage
diverges
un-felt
like split sky
lifting
the curved shoulder
of an airplane wing.
I.

He stopped donating plasma
because pulling his body up the plastic holds
of artificial cliffs
had obscured his fingertips
and he could no longer be identified.

They’d scan and re-scan,
cracked calluses
unmatchable
against whorled portraits of his old self.
*We just don’t know who you are,*
I imagined the staff saying. *We’re sorry.*

I could recognize him in the dark
just by feeling
the rind
of each thickened fingertip

both sensor and fence
like the way his hands read walls.
II.

He describes
new routes at the rock wall:
the big green hand
he can’t quite reach

and how -
based on this distance,
and the chalk-ghosts
of each hold

he thinks the route may be impossible,
created by someone
interested in questions
answered by other bodies.

Cliffs carved by nature
may or may not accommodate
human grip.
Mountains are question marks

until proven otherwise
and erosion moves so slowly
we don’t notice
until the fall.

Inside, what matters is mastering a route
before it comes down,
before the path loses its identity
to a pile of holds and bolts.
III.

I practice
from the ground, moving my arms
up, right, across

in mock ascent,
to create false memories
that my body has done this before

but on the wall
I ask him to guide my movement
because I do not recognize myself up close.
Each limb is a stranger.

The next morning
my fingers press and swirl
against new calluses, souvenir and proof
of the vertical world.
NEVER CARRY MORE SACRED THINGS
THAN THE NUMBER OF YOUR HANDS

A gypsy woman in Prague
robbed my friend -
his hands were locked

in his pockets
over wallet and passport.
She yanked the cross at his throat

until the chain broke, scattered
to the cobblestones
like a golden mercury snake.
RECOVERING *DOVES*

_Bequeathed to the river..._

- _Thomas James Cobdon-Sanderson (diary entry)_

In 2013,

100 years after its disappearance

the vintage typeface

(electronic version,

reconstituted by Robert Green

from printed texts)

was released for £40.

Commissioned in 1899,

Edward Prince punch-cut the font

for London’s Doves Press.

They printed King James Bibles,

bound in green,

*Doves* straight-legged y’s ending each *Sunday*

elegant, plain

like Stickley legs,

Scandinavian vowels,

ale from a hand-carved wooden bowl.

In 1913,

old man Thomas James Cobdon-Sanderson

held *Doves* -

sharp metal rectangles, the thought

of mechanized printing

in anyone else’s hands -

and while his partner, Emery Walker, slept

Cobdon wrapped the letters in 12-lb parcels,

stole to the Thames

and secreted their shared voice

into the river.
Over three years,
2,600 lbs of jumbled Psalms
fell from Hammersmith Bridge,
collected
in an underwater divot
like beads loosed from a giant’s broken necklace.

In loss, the printed words were admired,
examined
curves defined by white space,
negatives of the hands that put them there.

In 2014,
Robert Green reached into the river
and recovered the cache,
found
the river’s hands had not yet silenced
the metal keys.
PASSENGERS

Fall

We built the fence, filled it
with leaves - other people’s yards
carried in by the bagful,

bony outlines
pressing the black plastic
from within.

He’s been sowing seeds
all week, kneeling
in the shuffled-leaf garden.

So far the backyard remains -
to me - a greenless mystery
of composting leaves.

I complained
the leaves would never degrade,
their only task to forget

the open fingers of their original shape
and so become the possibility
of everything else.
Spring

We turn the top layer to reveal rich, crumbly soil.
He re-seats an ivory taproot, quick
to forget it has ever seen anything
but the good darkness.

I notice a miniature thicket of new green,
straight shoots vertical, uniform
like the small world’s white crosses.
*What are these?* I ask.

He describes the rough, thick seed pod
young sprout come from, and I know it - *Redbud*
dark purple
like a leather couch my parents once had.

For some reason I’d always called the pods
*Cecropia* - the giant moth I watched emerge
from its stiff cocoon
tented to a wooden ladder in the garage.

*Did you plant them?* I ask him.
No - it was the leaves,
the bags of last year’s leaves
carried unknown passengers.

Redbud Cecropia.
*Will you pull them up?* I ask.
He looks at me
like that day the moth first opened its wings.
What remains
WHAT REMAINS (1)

Robert J. Stupka
1983-2005
- Resurrection Cemetery, Mendota Heights, MN

I.

Memory began
when brains picked up the slack
of forgetting eyes;

it began with a story:

around a fire, on the trail,
in dark during second sleep,
no evidence of the tale.

Surely before
the ancient French cave paintings
now sealed, sacred air

above ochre
was uttered some description,
the red palms precursor
to past tense -

and writing

old trees
embedded barbed wire guarding
against something not there -

then printing,
metal plates struck
like ruminated fists

we could paint you,
photograph

holding crushed gemstones in tubes,
Lapis Lazuli blue. Malachite green.
animal hair dipped in strange lakes
of the rememberer’s palette.

impasto glances
closer to skin.
II.

There will be more
cemeteries and mourning lockets,
body parts
tethered and curled

in gold, or approximated
by paint. Little eyes, too small
for anyone but the lover to see.
III.

I carry you in my _____.

IV.

Thank goodness for pockets. Stories need carrying.
V.

Here let us document
what early humans remembered:

How to make fire.
How to make love.
How to strike stones into an arrow.

How to identify nontoxic berries;
migration patterns, flyways;
how to read signs

what to do
when a woman is split open
by her child.
VI.

A disposable paper plate, red, in the shape of a bear head.
His name written on it in Sharpie
taped to his dorm door to mark the place where he’d sleep
by the RA who pretended not to notice
the frequently double-booked cave.

The oversized Patagonia fleece, size XL, thrifted,
given to him the previous Christmas;
that smelled like him
for weeks after until it finally smelled like me.

The two glass perfume decanters
he brought back from Egypt for his mother and me:

one, a crystal globe
and its wisped, flamed stopper
on his mother’s kitchen sill

above the sink, how light filters through
its amber perfume
slowly breaking down -

without ever touching - each molecule
that would, if lifted to air, yield
jasmine, memory.

The second, a camel:
still in its bubble wrap now,
unwrapped once, when I first

opened it; I said, Beautiful thank you
Let’s keep this
protected
VII.

Miracle, how light allows us to perceive.

The schematics of sight:
    pinholed, high-fidelity photon acrobatics
on fleshy trampolines.

And yet the only designer evidenced by the human eye is that of a squid, for the cephalopod eye feeds nerves straight from power source to aperture, like an engineer would design.

The human eye: imagine you are watching a home video on your TV. A blonde-mopped toddler stumbles toward his birthday present - but before they meet, black-plasticized veins emerge from the screen, curl forward around its lip and dive into the black pupil of the child’s blurred face: blind spot.
This is how our brains feed
our vision - backwards, seemingly
haphazard,
observation retrofitted
such that each sure frame
contains a conclusion
jumped to.
The grace of their breakage
THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY

Overheard: Daughter’s side of a phone conversation with her semi-deaf father

Losing your watch
is not a crisis.

Is not
a sign.

It is what happens
when you get
really old.

Listen:
this
means nothing.

This
is not a sign.

Losing your watch
means nothing.

Is not a sign.

You are
really old, and -
Listen -
this is normal.

Just ask

your friends.

I cannot
find your watch

for you.

Try to be
a little more relaxed.

You are getting old.

This is not a crisis.

Everyone
loses
their watch.
FIELD GUIDE

I discovered the owl
dead -
wings sprawled -
in the gravelly ditch by my house.

Intact, no evidence
of fang or impact;
had the hands that laid it
face-down

carried sacredness? Shame?
I fanned the barred feathers
that once sieved sky.
I wanted to show everyone

but I covered the body,
carved a feather into bark
as headstone.
We go around digging holes

like the universe
is a computer game,
amateur geologists querying
each digital soil pocket an epiphany

of instructions: hardness,
fracture.
We identify gems
according to such things

as the grace of their breakage.
EACH TREE, ONCE CUT, CONTAINS THE FUEL OF ITS OWN DESTRUCTION

For insurance purposes, would I need to prove
the accordion’s lungs held air?
I’d pull opposite ends to unpleat the bellows,
then push them closed, depressing one button at a time
while video documented the tremor of each note.

What about the high D
that sounds only from one direction?
*It’s too complicated,* the music shop told me.
*You can’t fix it yourself.*
*Have you ever opened it up*

*and looked inside?*
I have. I was afraid to breathe
on all those levers, reeds.
Instead, I learned to play that one note
always pressing in.
LAYOVER

I.

Many others have witnessed
Sandhill Cranes migrate through Kearney, Nebraska,
the swarming inkblot
of birds overlapping

so I watched
the faces of everyone else in the blind,
creamsicle sunset
snared in their binoculars.

II.

In paintings of lonely cafes

the patrons
have arrived, escaped from life
and the servers
have yet to depart, tethered to it

with the orders about to be placed.

III.

The second thing I did
was write on a scrap of paper
his time of death

and the third thing I did
was call the university to explain
why I would be late
to complete my finals.
On our drive home from the hospital
my mother stopped at a cafe, made me eat soup

but it was no comfort,
the leather chair
and heat-tuned spoon

or the decision
of wood vs. metal caskets
or the first thing, that has become

the only thing - the reaching out to husks
of bodies, searching -
but the syllabi with their assignments

and notebooks with their empty lines
answered me in such a way
I felt they were listening.

IV.

Seeing them land would do no good;
we must think of the birds
as forever

coming and going,
the game
of Rorschach sky

hiding and revealing itself
as if one day a wing will tuck in
and show us the moon.
SURVEILLING

Mice hide from the hawk
perched on the 10-miles-to-home sign,
surveilling
without turning its head

the tall, dry ditch grass
tangled like unkempt hair.
No one pretends a comb is scissors.

Awe as the hawk cuts
across my path, the small figure between talons
bowed slack like a dark scroll.
STILL LIFE

The rabbit hung, tail-up
as if diving, long body belted
by the fence’s green wire.

I stood at the dryer and pressed warm towels
to my chest, my neck.

Through the basement window
the rabbit’s hind legs spoked toward me,
stiff like rusted springs.
Hindquarters

topping over, as if still possessed
by momentum, front paws poised
above pale winter grass
on the other side of the fence.
I laid the towel flat
on top of the others,

arranging plush terry ribs
in a neat pattern.
I imagined
the fence, wire prop
of a museum display:

the rabbit’s heroic arcing leap;
implied landing

and quick dash away.
WE MET IN THE ATTIC

“It’s lovely up here,” you said.

“Yes,”
I agreed
in the corner
against a slanted wall,
the highest you could climb -
“What brought you here?”

“Stalagmites
accumulate
with the patience of
gravity.

Stalagmites
“Oh, you know, some
people like their backs to the wall.”

I said. Chalk dust clings to the angle, you hang intentionally at the edge of escape.

“Let’s go climbing sometime,”
you say. “I’m climbing the walls,” mothers say.
Caves climb themselves and the first intentional painters planted palms on limestone. You dip your fingers in white magnesite. Ghost chalk imprints hands on me.
SURFACING

I.

In Science Communication class we take a quiz used by educators to gauge the public’s science literacy: questions like

*Does the Earth revolve around the Sun or does the Sun revolve around the Earth?*

One girl misses *(T/F) The center of the Earth is very hot.*
I thought that it was very cold, she says.
Later, I realize that once, long ago, she was right and one day she will be right again.

II.

At night, electric veins innervate the dark globe like shimmering ore. North Dakota blooms gold.

Residents of Bakken-area Reservations cannot escape view of the natural gas flared by fracking. There is no night not artificially lit by the Earth’s upchurned belly.
I think of the amber body of gasoline, how trucks feed drums buried at gas stations, the whole process hidden.
To each birdlike oil rig perched on boomtown earth, the worm is a drill-line
to the 400 million-years-old sediment
humans can’t help but call
to the surface.

III.

In geologic cartoons
the Earth’s sliced skin reveals
    an aggregate of trilobites, dinosaur skulls, femurs,
    randomly distributed hollow pebbles, and ferns.

I imagine cemeteries’ wood and metal cartons
added to the image - jumbled,
    heaved by an Earth that itches
to grind down those sharp points.

IV.

The whipstock is an invention
that revolutionized how we approach oil:
rather than straight down, tangential -
a curved straw
that sips the dark layer

in parallel, like an infinite road
ours for the taking
in all directions,
sunk hands cupping the Earth’s stories
while we smolder

its surface,

that sense of stillness.
BROKEN IN

Between stalls - before the stable assigned me
Drifter - I found a blind horse and watched a fly
launch from his ribs, swelling with breath.
The cataract was solid like a sun-bleached stone.

In line behind me and Drifter, Nick rides Tucker;
Chris rides Jerry farther up. All the horses, brown.

_Five hundred times on this trail, _they said.
No need to steer - _They could do it blind._

Drifter shifts, jostles, lurches for grass.
_Don't let them eat_, the trail leader shouts.

I jerk his reins, pat his neck. Fixed units:
one person, one horse. I lean forward

to help my horse go up a hill. _Good boy, Drifter_  
I say. I can’t recall the blind horse’s name.

He lays inside waiting - for hay, for someone
to clean his shoes, lead him to the line.
YOU ACT LIKE INCOMPLETE SENTENCES ARE
THE MOST

I said, I can’t be with someone
Either you take apart
Like how cheese graters work
with their sharp openings up.
who hasn’t been in therapy.
Technically, gravity could do all the work.
or you don’t.
your French press every day,

You learned to swim
I waterproofed my suede boots
breathing on threes.
and stood in the corner.
Rain never has a change of heart on the way down.
women in Aquabells run
with your elbows like flags,
Meanwhile, I said,
in perpetual float.
Me, I prefer
the street or you don’t.
You either cross
straight lines.

I met an Earth Science teacher
I was a ritual
counting gutters.
who quit because of Pluto.
taking a class
You like to
don’t like being told
when you could become an expert?
walk on the curb,
You said, why bother
Some people
somebody else wrote.

There wasn’t enough
on a shelf in a store.
The fence I chose was
In the room, I was cut
wallpaper to print the rules on.
into a thousand pieces.
The report came
Is this enough?
already there,
two weeks late,
but then, it was a serious case.
you asked.
ALERT: ANIMALS FLEEING THE PARK
YELLOWSTONE VOLCANO ERUPTION IN 2014?

The video footage
of bison galloping down the wide
yellow-striped asphalt belt
that bisects a shallow Yellowstone basin
accrued hundreds of thousands of views,
accompanied
by speculative maps:
fallout zones in concentric rings
of increasingly darker,
more urgent red.
Imagine driving in to the park,
not out - face to face against
this heavy-boned migration
one window down, one arm balancing a camera -
Over the engine’s rumble you’d never feel
the 20 earthquakes seismologists say
Yellowstone shudders every day.
Richter 3.0 or less,
detected
only by the quiet listening bones
of animals
and our fine instruments.
A metal arm scrawls erratic v’s
on the rolling, pale green ream
of graph paper, recording
each shifting moment:
straw, sensed
upon North America’s back.
In the Park, each earthquake
mounts its gravity
upon previous history, numbers adding up
to the last eruption
640,000 years ago.
You cannot tell
when a volcano may declare
the final sum, scientists say.

Geologists measure
magma, hidden reserves
of the earth’s molten body,
not unlike how Bison enthusiasts
dissect the animals’ gait
for the rhythm of urgency.
How much quickness makes a stampede?
Frame by frame,
you can see the space
between hoof and road,
slow it down
as if floating.

Days later, Discovery Channel News
announced the alarmists’ flaws:
how the bisons’ trot was normal,
no reason to fear
that the ground below
endured more than a normal quiver.

And what was it like
to rewatch the mis-labeled video,
corrected, knowing
that the herd moved
not away, but in:
to the park, the center,
the collection place
where -
some day
not quite yet -
the little quakes will become, all at once, too much.
HARVEST DAY

In Pammel Woods, the spot most open to sun
brought the most risk.
He and I clambered the steep trail,
loose dirt we’d clung to on watering days
as trains throttled around the curve.
This time we carried scissors instead of gallon jugs
filled with nearby stream.

He harvested while I kept watch on the tracks.
Rain splattered the rose-pink stones
thick, like bullets of paint.
An engine growled closer, and I saw the green light
flash to a red X. We dove into the ditch, ducked
and buried our hands in soil, searching for roots
to hold us there until the final car passed.
WHAT REMAINS (2)

His skull in its sepulchre.

This page.

These black and white serifed fragments,
beaming -
speed of light

received
to the curled empty
hand of your eyes.

And it will be you -
yes, you
whose eyes perceive

what is left
whose brain wrestles
salvage into sense.
INITIATION

The bees arrive
in a wooden carrier box, six thousand
melting into each other like caramel, chocolate

and little legs splay through the mesh
like new feathers from a baby Robin’s translucent skin.
Carniolans: the Italian breed is valued

for docility, the unlikeliness of sting
even without a smoker.
If you reach in, the vibrating mass

will engulf your hand,
gentle prickles clothing you
in swarm-skin.

The queen comes packaged
separately within the rest,
like a cereal prize

and when the apiarist
fishes out her little coffin-box
bees cling to it, grapes of the same vine.

If you take a bee home
without others, it will die.
Without a queen

bees will still cooperate, churn
childless but honeyed
until their wings burn out.

The apiarist thwacks the cluster
to dislodge drones. A swarming solid,
they plop into the hive.

The queen is easy to identify -
a particular longness of her thorax -
when she is isolated like this.
The apiarist demonstrates
how the smoker mimics a forest fire,
frightens bees

into drinking honey to prepare for the worst.
Scarabaeidae
SCARABAEIDAE

Scientists discovered that roller dung beetles (that, along with several other species of dung beetle, belong to superfamily Scarabaeidae) orient to polarized light of the sun, moon, and also Milky Way to trace straight lines while walking backwards across otherwise featureless land. This dung-source escape route most efficiently minimizes risk of having their prize stolen.

I.

the dung beetle:
roller, tunneler, dweller.
three little piggies went to market:
one rolled away.
one dug straight down.
one stayed there.

the roller rolls its heavy sphere along gravity’s edge, guided by burning inverse black holes that float.
the illusion
of lightness. of emptiness. of a hole as knowledge.
pinpricks in black as a map worth following.
circle of dung as geometry of promise.
polarized light moves in circles we can’t see.

but they can. the roller dung beetle backtracks to his future, shit in a hole with a seed in it, a wheelbarrow on hands with rolling feet, his straight line intersecting circles of the sun, the moon,
the wild line of the milky way.
II.

pigs are not dirty animals. 
nor dumb. 

some built a house 
with mud and straw. 

rolling in mud does not make you dirty. 
or dumb. 

the universal misunderstanding 
of brownness 

can be taken as advantage 
for those willing to look backwards.
III.

at nature camp, we study animal tracks, scat. I squat over the lesson plan, learn by looking. 

coprophagia

rabbits eat their waste.

“They didn’t get all of it the first time,” my mother explained.

“All of what?” she says nevermind, focus on the feet they stamp in snow.

she gives me a silver cartouche, symbols on the back. I cannot decipher a name, just royal greeting.

the sterling curlings melted somewhere into a new shape, precision of these syllables too fine to leave their signature in the snow. it is easier to spot the knowledge they’ll come back for.
Here, doggy doggy doggy

I just want to pet you
V.

Hellmouth
in paintings
ravenous teeth, hollow eyes carved
into stone, painted red always

red
in a painting
circa 1440, Jesus sits
   white sphere,
   egg siphoned
   out the yolk
   so it can float light
above Hellmouth
raging

red, teeth
tongues
lashing
hungry

for the knowledge
of those who ate
the whole egg
VI.

we all know about the apple that danger is a rib that learned
and eden, how knowledge is to whisper into muscle
ripeness of a woman and to dislocate its hips
VII.

meat is muscle is red from heme
iron machine mitochondria motion
motors

the opposite of dead
VIII.

un-ritual cannibalism of necessity is not like
ritual cannibalism of intrigue like how

you are what you eat

like how the doctrine of signatures prescribed walnuts for brain fissures
not like the ancient egyptians forged a tool, threaded the brain through the nostrils

and didn’t eat it

(didn’t send it in jars to Hellmouth, either
left it, garbage for the dogs)
IX.

your little brother
ate dog poop once
when he was two

he got smarter so
maybe

it worked. I aimed
in a cup and drank, chewed
my scabs
cured clotting factors
but

what could I learn

from myself
X.

anubis  
was a dog who could stand

upright  
over mummies  
oversaw the embalming  
ensured their hearts were ready  
prepared, stonewared, jackal headed

for weighing against  
the feather
XI.
skeletal muscle
we cannot control
chambers sealed
on themselves repeatedly
with just enough room
to breathe, the color
a secret that keeps itself
when it’s cut open

XII.
heavy dense heap of shit
head-high, engineered
in a story
stick in your hand
with a glove or without
root around wet for clues
about filling in the blanks
of dinosaurs
with frogs

_They are there in the hundreds, large and small, of every sort, shape and size, hastening to carve themselves a slice of the common cake._

_-Jean-Henri Fabre (1823-1915), French entomologist, on dung beetles_
for my 13th birthday, my father gives me a scarab, carved pale green ceramic. its back split blind to the skies, glued down wings, belly flat to make a seal with ink, neo-paper, red clay.

this is where figures are hidden. I read meaning into pictures, the beetle itself a sound stuck in muck. feather, river, basket, some obscured white space devolves to relief, our fingers read the ground for dots find a straight line while our skin feels light, our eyes weigh what we see a name pressed in mud recycled initials waiting a baby eating its way out from underground
Part sand, part soil, part tree
INFORMATION ASSURANCE

*The Higgs boson - theorized in 1964 and confirmed in 2013 - was called the God particle by popular media.*

In the future
your digital afterlife is secured.
Every tweet, dream, thought
is Instagrammed, lassoed
tucked into the cloud –
safekeeping
fragments of self
as if we can fill cups
with vapor.

Physicists spot
the particle they’d predicted
and the world waits for a new name
for god - the boson
omnipresent, yet
only witnessed
in dark chambers for less than a nanosecond.

Google anticipates
questions hovering in your mouth,
wi-fi air quenched
with pre-queued answers
so you no longer need to wonder.

All I want
is an unlit corner,
a book to read that hasn’t been scanned.
To know something the internet doesn’t.
To encounter unknown matter
in a dark tunnel
with no button to punch.
You can’t put your finger on it. Something swarming, cold. Flat, dry.
Green rivers off a duck’s back
like unread map: Iowa.

You say you don’t want to live here
but our fields already reach you,
become you. Trojan corn. We hold
our breath longer, stand last in line
to drown again. Isabel, Ivan, Katrina,
Rita Storm on your finger
like a diamond: inverse of hurricane,
volatility. Sweep out your fancy cheekbones
before they carve empty caves.
Wilma, Dean, Felix - Ours is a slow freeze.

Sleet opinions, scarecrow debris.
Linens snap in wind, trap sun.
Farmhouses don’t bother opening their mouths.
Joinery without nails, wood without name.

Coasts import long beams, frayed where a swallow raised eggs, rooted home to stable place.
Admit you smell hay in the sun’s sweet shadow.

We practice cold feet.
We don’t ask why.
Ice will come again
and so will the opposite of drowning
as the Mississippi rolls good-bye.

*Hello.* Go to your other places -
we will be here

when uphill flows down,
when whitecap seas blinds
and you beg weathermen
to translate the lapping at your feet.

We will be here - pitchfork; mud -
knowing right where we are
when the new storm swoops down

where cables snake in,
when the TV dials down its warm snow
to whisper
over your shoulder -

to report, *it’s your turn*
in the alphabet: this time, history
steals your silt-engraved name.
MOTHER OF PEARL

Farther than usual into the woods
we join an old deer path, follow it
to Skunk River - sunken
to a trickle that barely anchors
the rippled, cavernous walls to this place.

Mid-stream, a massive tree
upturned by last year’s flood.
The dogs sniff invisible things
and I squat, unearth
an ancient bottle caked in dirt:

Mayonnaise, a brand long lost,
its raised cursive script
shadowed in morning light.
The tree’s gnarled roots
are like tentacles

guarding vessels
of medicine, beverage, food.
I extract the dirt-dulled bottles,
arrange them
as a scalloped spine

oil-bathed pearlescence
glowing
nacreous, animal
like some natural luster -
part sand, part soil, part tree.
What excites students the most
is not
squid ink sac,
the stiff scent
of formaldehyde.
It is certainly not
the reproductive cycle
of bryophytes, gemmae
and the raining of sperm on umbrella-like structures.
Perhaps a close runner-up
is the day we open
the microscope cabinets: fascination
bubbles up
for something as small as an onion cell.

What excites students the most
is the day we discuss
the directionality
of earthworms, pinned open -
the day I remind them
We started as a blob of cells
and, like a worm, had to form
a digestive tract -
the day I tell them
There are two ways to make a tube:
head-first, or the other way -
the day they learn
they are *deuterostomes*.

They do not want it to be the truth
but we are all
butt-heads.
9 YEARS LATER

November/December 2014

I.

In the car I harmonize
with a lo-fi ballad on the college radio station,

_oooi_ing one 7th higher than the melody.

This interval is not an arrival,

but like balancing
on the forbidden top step of a ladder,
fingertips not quite reaching

the octave ceiling.
I pull my down vest closer,
crescendo
into that dissonance

the individual notes sparring,
blurring
into one complex entity

like how a woman’s perfume
that you cannot identify

lingers
all day, its charm

in refusing to reveal

how its score of notes became

a constellation.
II.

In the kitchen, preparing a snack, I count to 100 in French. Mostly a pastime, a reflex, but there are several rules to which I must lend particular attention, like tricky measures in my choir music circled, thumbed-to and held at my side, just en cas the first time we sing a piece memorized.

For instance, the 1s above teens (21, 31, 41, etc.) declare the addition of their construction:
21 is twenty-and-one, vingt et un;
But 22 is twenty-two: vingt deux.

The “and” form primes the mind to insert ets between future numbers, connection implied. Like if you and someone else stand above the same grave you act as parts of the same number.
In English I am twenty nine, not twenty and nine. He was twenty one, not twenty and one.

After 1s, I proceed on autopilot pouring chips in a bowl until 9 arrives in my mouth. Then I must remember not to graduate to 10 because twenty-ten is not the same as thirty.

IX: 9 is 10 minus 1.
9 is almost, not-quite, just-under, under-the-radar, below-the-surface.
Like how the French construct time: 5:29 p.m. could be ten-seven hours and ½ minus 1, dix-sept heures et demie moins une minute.
IX: 9 is likely the last number you’d remember
before bright lights blindside you airborne,
\(X\) the impact smashes your spine
beyond continuity
painkillers mute your blood
or a hand aims true

but misses, skims,
just barely fails
to protect you.
III.

On November 30, 2014, it has been 9 years since nurses removed his sweat-drenched hospital gown and the group-praying, hug-sobbing organism filtered out of the Minnesota hospital in forced clumps, jacketed clots the size of an elevator car.

I’d counted each person on my fingers, claws for 10 releasing again and again to mark 20, 30, 40.

After 9 years, I explain to a fellow yoga teacher why I’d like a sub for my class that day and sense the single digit, swollen to its limit.
IV.

On November 30, 2014, I too occupy
the underside of a ledge: almost 30
(29 and 364/365ths, a cumbersome number
his parents never anticipated
as anything but a reminder
to purchase a humorous birthday card).

A study shows that divorce rates increase
for each year of difference
in spousal age.
What happens when my birthday cards arrive
with phrases like Over The Hill and Happy 29th (Again)?

Each March on his birthday
the ones who remember
count two ages:
the calculated Would Have Been …
and the other,
like a palm, always the same -

twenty one,
twenty one again,
twenty and one -

so many ones, now,
and some day, more than I can count.
Sculptors free the figure from stone.
But imagine if a songbird
fell
into the jaw-like

giant mould

for a concert hall balcony.

Bird bones are light, dendritic whispers.
Concrete reforms what’s fractured

into a new whole.

Grey would pour in,

    seal itself

over the soft body

like a violin carved from one tree.
The bird’s chambers, a hollow pit

in concrete flesh -

miniature catacombs

    that echo

opening night

while velvet ladies fan collarbones,

programs wrinkle and close

children squirm on firm-sprunged seats

and the orchestra bows:

    another resonant body,
    weeping

into the new stone.
HALF-LIFE

I.

My Biochemistry textbook
has depreciated from $140 to $14
while the 1,360-page Physical Chemistry
retains half its value
perhaps because Physics reveals itself
more slowly.

These doorstoppers contain knowledge
that would scoop
Franklin, Watson, Crick (DNA),
McClintock (transposons),
Mullis (PCR);
would flip geocentric Europe
inside out:
jailers becoming the jailed,
heiocentrism
validated, even banal -

our solar system
a metaphor
for the atom:
the elliptical path
of electrons taunting
nucleus -
the center that hides
(neutrons
(neutrality, the decay
behind carbon dating,
isotope tracers,
Hiroshima))
in plain sight.
II.

It is difficult to recognize
important things
(nuclei, suns)
    because they themselves move
to the gravity of
something larger
(molecules, galaxies).
    The pull at our feet is
the most convincing proof:
what we can feel,
believe
    for ourselves.

III.

4.5 billion years from now:
Still we install light switches
as if our fingers, not the sun,
have the power
to decide when the lights go out.
IN THE AUCTION BARN (2)

Cast-iron irons
queue on the smooth gray floor like ships.
Children mill.
Curls of Fritos litter the floor like wood shavings.

Several auction-goers gawk
at a butcher’s pig-size sign
of a pig, each cut dotted-up and labelled
like the thirteen colonies.

1960’s Playboys in a box on a table.
Collectors rifle through
noting date, condition,
blind to face or bush.

I pop open a vintage Samsonite case in the dumpster:
cracked mirror, soap flakes, and travel-sized shampoos
from a Super 8.

A man wearing a wireless mic points and shouts
to civilize it all, tracking hands in the crowd.

When I was a girl
my mother explained why people bid
so high on a pair of salt-and-pepper shakers
that looked like bottles of Aunt Jemima.

They are selling vintage toys now.

A miniature 1960’s Plymouth totes a boat
named “Old Glory.” No one drives
but its steering wheel is enameled
in faux wood grain,
its dashboard clock stuck at noon.
Most signals are dichotomies: Either/Or. Everyone starts a woman unless informed otherwise. I sign up for a course that will taxonomize our taxonomic disagreements.

We walk and I almost trip on an upheaved concrete seam. What about the squirrel with a white tail? Does he send an honest signal? Be honest about your trophy bike, about what she gives you. 1800s, bloomered women were too fast, were threatened with “bicycle face” - like an adult stooping to warn a child: Don’t Make That Face, It Might Freeze That Way.

My friend calls her bike - red - *The Menstrual Cycle*. No pannier can hold a whole life (could it?) but we walk by the slivered path in the woods and for a moment I can see the home(less) tents. Orange nylon, waterproof zippers, logs to sit on and one man plays saxophone:

it could be good. Don’t get too close. It’s like reaching your finger through the wired lattice of a cat carrier, pre-vaccination. Behind closed doors, the enemy incubates with mercury we only think we feel, will blog about, sure as placebo, and then all that will be left is a bruise that doesn’t show, and a zillion ghost hashtags. The banded arm approaches. The name is embroidered in red by a machine programmed to dance in quick, silver punctures. Is the imitation good enough? Some people say Neanderthals are humans, too.
To be the same species, two parties must produce viable offspring. Spring constants groan as we are forced to touch the boundary. Look away, as if to ignore that humans are born with hair on their faces. 2015, and some women’s colleges admit women who admit (application check-box: gender) they might be men. Start girl, enter the dorm bathroom and they might kick you out before you can shave your beard. The key is, bleeding within - among - the females. Among the formulas. Your body is a home, a wisdom, not someone else’s problem.

Tense the animal-skin tent into a drum, over a circle; its debut, like slapping the cheek that kept your secret. Speak, or don’t. Into veins, a syringe shudders disease to sleep.
BACKSTAGE BEFORE A CONCERT

*Cantamus Women’s Choir, Iowa State University*

Women in black velvet dresses, some in stockings
and some who figured out that knee-highs do the trick
without overheating onstage.
Women with tubes of lipstick
patrol for those with nude lips, painting the choir
in carnelian, magenta, brick.

I don’t daydream of children, but when I tell one singer
how good the pink looks on her lips
I linger on how unfair it is
that biology would deprive us of the option.
We women open our mouths
and create a full sound, Altos so low

the audience swears we snuck in a Bass.
This decade is the parade of states
following one another with rainbow flags
and yet god remains bigoted; and by god
I mean nature - the spiritual, zen, blooming-flowers god
I smile at with my hands in namaste.

Donors, IVF, glass pipettes help our species
surmount these gametic deficiencies
but when I sing among my choirmates,
144 lungs cooperating
for a unified message I am unsettled

at how all the reasonable humans in the world
cannot picket evolution; cannot revise
inbred imbalance: all of us cellos,
unstrung nurturers, canvases wanting paint.
GIANT

Gypsum River, Iowa

I reach into the river, negotiate
the angle of my hand against current
to control how quickly silt is freed
from the crevices of my palm
and carried downstream.

In the 1860s, 36 miles north-northwest of here
a slab of gypsum (sedimentary evaporite:
what solidified when water left)
was lifted from the earth
and carved into a massive statue of a man.

Far away in Cardiff, New York
he was buried by his creator, lost,
and (a year later) found:

a staged resurrection at the digging of a well.
Water, always doing the work.

The statue was erected for people to see
at fifty cents each.

They wanted to believe he was real
and, despite the hoax’s reveal,
the stone man stands

at the New York museum.
And still my skeleton holds
no surprises between the fleshy sieve of its fingers.
SUBDUCTION ZONE

Seattle

Pressing borders deform
4 mm per year
as North America holds her ground

and Juan de Fuca
dives under.
In the subduction zone

rock is no longer certain,
molten ice cubes
overflowing the soda.

1953
Not far from ocean, not far
from magma, baby blue
and cream-striped vehicles
process

across Alaskan Way:
oddity,
a double-decker bridge
suspended above land.

2001
Thirty-two miles below
surface,
asphalt,
the chunky soles of Seattleites

the Nisqually earthquake
reverberates - its violence,
the world on its back and nowhere to go
but up, out.
Imagine the heat:

a wet dog
packed in melted sand
trying to shake off the ocean.

2014
A tunnel is carved
underground
to fortify the city
against fluid edges;
to capitulate
to gravity -

nowhere to fall
but the earth’s curved palm.

The DOT released a photo
of the progress:
a massive, concrete hollow,
grey checkered seams
like windowpanes
in a space station.

The only way to know
which way is down

is people: two small figures
walk the bottom
as if in moonboots,
the barrel about to roll.
CHEMISTRY/ARRIVAL

[The highest mountain] was hidden
behind peaks that were nearly as tall.
- Rebecca Solnit, “The Art of Arrival”

I.

Into a bucket of steaming water
I toss a handful of salt -
the ions alter chemistry so dyes can bond
to a boring white shirt.

Red, blue, yellow
crystals plunk in, bleed
like colored sugar on frosting.

I stir the bright stars black,
flood the fabric map.

The bark-colored button-up hangs,
 drying its new skin
as I scrub the dye bucket -

that permanent grey ring
gathered shadow by shadow
marking the crest
of broth, experiment.
II.

The black dot of Boulder
melts forward to meet my mother and me,
driving from the Midwest.

“There must be thousands here,”
she said when we stopped halfway
to watch migrating cranes land in Nebraska.

We hid in the blinds, aiming binoculars
at this bird or that, silhouettes
inventing our own constellations.

III.

In Lyons, I sit at a park bench between parks
and call
before mountains will shield our signal.

What I remember now
is confetti in the mud
at my feet - our penchant

for purchasing mis-tint paint,
prying a new lid
and reading the color like fortunes.

IV.

I wait as long as I can stand
to lift each dyed item from the bucket.
I want the colors to stay.
V.

Mom drives up the mountain.
I watch reception bars disappear
one by one like undone hatchet marks.

Logs interlace each corner of our cabin
like a prayer, precise notches
dovetailed for a seamless joint.

Outside, I palm the rough ends
of each trunk, accustomed
to lumberyards’ clean cuts.

VI.

Arrival:
Watercolor dusk,
car key hot from the ignition,
engine pinging.
Canvas bags bumble each arm.

I unlock our door
and the dogs lick my hands
summer-cold.

Metal gates closing
somewhere.
The Rockies, open all night
standing on the horizon
without any help at all.
ADVENTITIOUS ROOTS

Always looking out, the rain-
scented sky of the plains in her
eyes, loose curls disobedient sun

yellow straw that just won’t stay
bound tight: farm girl with a vision,
she left muddy boots back home,
drove
east
to learn Latin
names of the plants growing
roots where she’d started - Zea
mays color crayons of her hair –
blew
west
to study anatomy, slip on
a crisp white coat, nametag mentality,
scrubbed up like overalls, sterile prepared

the cadaver, bare, simple, splayed
open and spare of blood, so much
like all those sows she’d named and

cried for the spotted one. Bleach
got the blood out
but never the dirt.
I KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

it’s summer at a time of year
when everyone else you know has forgotten
about summer

you are examining an Egyptian butterfly
with an oversized magnifying glass
no circle big enough
for you

I know where you are

you are surrounded by exotic flowers
you’ve identified with a field guide
reading a thick book recently published
about our ancestors’ genes
and people around you in turbans
are enjoying the sun in a way that’s
practiced

I know where you are

in a photo on a dusty hard drive
put there before hard drives
got dusty

I know where you are

I thought I’d forget by now

I know where you are

I thought I’d write you to let you know
evolution is still real
and still “just” a theory

to some people (nobody
you and I know)

I know where you are

it is winter here and there’s no snow
yet, and the same last year

in Minnesota then Iowa, you never knew
a winter without snow - even that winter
you went to Egypt, you came back

(there was a bombing there
the same day you arrived,
but you came back)

Iowa, your magnifying glass froze in your
pocket
shatter-resistant lens, I still have it
I imagine your eyes
on the other side

but I know where you are

Minnesota, the earth resistant like a real winter
in fact we sent you off under quite the snow
a big circle bulging out from the tent
everyone who loved you breathing
little clouds
we sang “You are my Sunshine”
it was dark and still snowing
hence the tent
you would’ve found it
home-y

I know where you are
body heat
adding to entropy

I know where you are

the exact address
you’ll be
even on holidays

I imagine where you are

not your body but
where your mind got stuck
in the helicopter ripping between white states
me speeding on the asphalt under you
when did you stop listening
when did the words stop
making sense

I imagine your mind mapping

the damage to your body
listening for clues from the voices
gnawing on data over you
trying to sate themselves
emotionally, like a hunger
for blood clotting factors

in the road you threw up
the paramedics said
black beans
cheese
softened shreds of a beige plane

I told your mother, “we always
had black bean quesadillas
in the dining hall.” mystery
solved. I always added olives to mine.

I know you

I think you threw up olives, too.

ey cut off your boxers
the ones I gave you for Christmas
red with butterflies
real enough
you could maybe identify them
with your field guide

I know where you are

always and finally
I can stop worrying about you
about slushy roads and dark crossways at the edge of winter

I know what you feel

we talked about it once
when you’re filling the bath and you can’t tell if it’s so hot it’s cold or if it really is ice cold
you look at the faucet turned to H but your body tells you no, that’s not true
it simply can’t be what I am experiencing